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Mr. Clark's
SERMON
AT THE
ORDINATION
OF
Mr. Muzzy.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM MUZZY,

TO THE

PASTORAL CARE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

IN

SULLIVAN, (NEWHAMPSHIRE)

FEBRUARY 7. 1798.

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PRINTED BY *JOHN PRENTISS*—KEENE, (NEWHAMPSHIRE.)

NOVEMBER, 1799.

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN

Ordination Sermon.

I. THESSALONIANS—II. 4.

AS WE WERE ALLOWED OF GOD TO BE PUT IN TRUST WITH THE GOSPEL, EVEN SO WE SPEAK, NOT AS PLEASING MEN, BUT GOD, WHICH TRIETH OUR HEARTS.

A MAN muſt be a ſtranger to himſelf and to human nature in its preſent depraved and vitiated ſtate, or but little acquainted with the Goſpel of CHRIST, not to admit the neceſſity and importance of ſuch a diſpenſation of grace, to the well being and happineſs of mankind, conſidered as rational accountable and immortal.

The great deſign of this diſpenſation of wiſdom and grace, is to bring ſalvation to loſt and periſhing ſinners, by teaching them effectually to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to "live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in the preſent world;" and in this way to "look for the bleſſed hope and glorious appearing of the great GOD and our Saviour JESUS CHRIST," unto eternal life.

This being the principal end of the Goſpel, next to its peculiar adaptedneſs to carry it to effect, nothing is of higher importance,

than the fidelity of thoſe *who are allowed of* God, *to be put in truſt with the Goſpel*, for the inſtruction of mankind in the true way to happineſs, and to preach unto Sinners *the unſearchable riches of* Christ.

Effectually to provide againſt a failure, in a point of ſo great conſequence, the Goſpel abounds with arguments, both powerful and convincing, and motives, awakening and endearing, to excite the Ambaſſadors of Christ, to the cloſeſt adherence to the inſtructions he had given them, and the greateſt fidelity in the employment to which they were called.

To this purpoſe, expreſsly, is the argument of our text, and the verſes connected with it, in the chapter before us. In a ſolemn appeal to the *Theſſalonians*, as to his conduct, preaching and ſucceſs, the Apoſtle obſerves—"For yourſelves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain." Ver. 1.

As an evidence of the firmneſs and fortitude with which he had diſcharged the duties of his office, notwithſtanding the oppoſition and perſecution he had met with ſo lately, in the cauſe of Christ and the Goſpel, he adds—"But even after that we had ſuffered, and were ſhamefully intreated, as ye know at *Phillippi*, we were bold in our God, to ſpeak the Goſpel of God. Ver. 2.

In the 3d verſe the Apoſtle aſſerts his ſimplicity and ſincerity, in preaching, and the purity of the doctrines he preached—"Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanneſs, nor in guile."

The doctrines he had taught, were, what appeared to him to be *the truth*—and there was neither deceit nor guile in his heart: Nor did he (as ſome falſe preachers had done) preach any thing that might tend to excuſe the indulgence of any *unclean luſt*, *appetite* or *affection*, as conſiſtent with the Goſpel, which he preached unto mankind.

In the words before us, the Apoſtle ſpeaks of the *permit*, *commiſſion*, or *authority*, he had to *preach* as from God—of the nature of his office

& the truſt repoſed in him, the rule by which and the manner in which this truſt was improved—"The end in view, and the argument, or motive to excite and induce his fidelity therein." Our exortation was not *of deceit*—but *as we were allowed of God, to be put in truſt with the Goſpel, even ſo we ſpeak, not as pleaſing men, but* GOD, *which trieth our hearts.*

Allowance or *Permiſſion* as here uſed, may be conſidered, as expreſſive of ſomething more than what is *indulged* or *winked at* by him, by whom *allowance* is made.

Taking the paſſage in connection with the Apoſtle's diſcourſe, it is eaſy to ſee, that *allowing*, here, is expreſſion of *ſuch* permiſſion, as couches and includes in it, not permiſſion only, but *ſincere* and *full* approbation. Accordingly ſome, with the celebrated Dr. Doddridge, have rendered it, "*approved of* GOD," which intimates, at leaſt, acceptance in, if not appointment to the work, in which the Apoſtle was engaged, and to which he had been called, as an ambaſſador of CHRIST.

But not to reſt the matter upon the conſtruction of any particular word, or ſentence, it is evident from the whole word of GOD, and from the nature of that diſpenſation of grace, with which a good and benevolent DEITY hath bleſſed the world, that the Miniſtry of the word is an ordinance of divine inſtitution. And next to the goodneſs and grace of the diſpenſation itſelf, in no one inſtance hath a wiſe and merciful GOD diſcovered the ſincerity of his intentions, or the intenſeneſs of his concern, for the ſupport of his cauſe, the eſtabliſhment of Religion, or the ſalvation of mankind, more effectually, than in this ſacred inſtitution, and in providing for a ſucceſſion of ſuch an order of men in his Church, as ſhould miniſter in holy things, wait at his Altar and *preach the word*, and *break the bread of life* to his people.

Under former diſpenſations, it was by divine permiſſion or appointment, that the *prophets* delivered the meſſages of GOD to his people, and taught and inſtructed mankind; & by his permiſſion or appointment the Prieſts waited on the Altar & attended the ſervice of the Sanctuary. It was GOD that appointed the order of the Prieſthood & the duties of their office; & it was GOD who "gave them paſtors according to his heart who were

to feed his people with knowledge and underſtanding." Jer. iii. 15: They were ſent forth with a "*Thus ſaith the* LORD," and were ever veſted with *credentials* ſufficient to prove the truth of their miſſion. Hence they were fitly ſtiled—"*The meſſengers of the* LORD *of* HOSTS." Mat. ii 7. And every one is ſuppoſed to have had a commiſſion and a charge ſimilar to that to Ezekiel, "Son of man I have ſet thee a watchman unto the houſe of Iſrael. Therefore thou ſhalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." Ezek. xxxiii. 7. In a word they ſpake as they were allowed of GOD.

Under the Goſpel, the Divinity of the juſtification of the Miniſtry of the word of reconciliation, ſeems, if poſſible, more expreſs and explicit.

"The work, to which the Miniſters of the Goſpel are called, is the work of GOD." "The authority by which they act, is of GOD." "The word they are to ſpeak, is GOD's." "The cauſe they are to plead, is his." "The houſe they are to build and the kingdom they are to advance, are his." "The embaſſy they are upon, is his; and "The end they are to keep in view, is the glory of GOD, in the happineſs of mankind, upon the terms of *the Goſpel*, with which they are intruſted. And to him muſt they render accounts, both of their doings, and ſucceſſes in office, at the judgment of the great day.

That the *Paſtoral* or *Miniſterial* office is to be conſidered in this light, and upon theſe accounts, as of divine inſtitution—that it is *from Heaven*, and *not of men*; and that it derives its original from GOD, is evident, not only from the nature and deſign of the ſacred employment of the Miniſters of CHRIST, and the conſtitution they are under, in general; but alſo, from *moſt expreſs* declarations in the Goſpel, from the titles given them and the place and character they ſuſtain in the kingdom of GOD, his Church.

Hence they are ſaid, expreſsly, to *have received their miniſtry of the* LORD—to be commiſſioned by CHRIST—to be *ambaſſadors of* CHRIST *Workers together with* GOD—*Stewards of the myſteries of* GOD—*Stewards*

of GOD, and *Stewards of the manifold Grace of* GOD. They are alſo called *Paſtors, Teachers, Elders, Rulers* and *Angels* of the Churches. All theſe *titles* and characters, evidently beſpeak the *Divine Original* of their office and inſtitution; and the impropriety of ſuppoſing them to take riſe from any other ſource.

It is, however, neceſſary to conſider here, when perſons may be ſaid to be "*allowed of* GOD, to be put in truſt with the Goſpel," in the ſenſe of the text. Thoſe, who ſerve at the altar and miniſter in the ſanctuary, are not to "run before they are ſent" They are not to engage in ſo important a work, till they are approved in the ways of GOD's appointment. "No man," ſaith the inſpired writer to the Hebrews, "taketh this honor to himſelf, but he that is called of GOD as was Aaron.—Even CHRIST glorified not himſelf to be made an High Prieſt." Heb. v. 4 and 5. "I am not come of myſelf, ſaith our LORD, but he that ſent me is true—and the Father hath ſent me." John VII. 28.

Hence GOD juſtly complained of the falſe prophets of old.—"I have not ſent theſe prophets; yet they ran: I have not ſpoken to them; yet they propheſied." And, in later times, even under the clearer light of the Goſpel, there have been but too juſt ground of complaint concerning many that have uſurped the ſacred office, who could, in no rational ſenſe, be conſidered as *allowed* or approved *of* GOD:

To obtain ſatisfaction, and diſtinguiſh with propriety, on a point ſo intereſting to religion and the peace, ſafety and eſtabliſhment of the Church, ſeveral things ought to be moſt ſeriouſly attended to.—Particularly, whether the perſons, in queſtion, are perſons duly qualified, called and introduced into the ſacred office of Miniſters of the Goſpel. A deficiency in either of theſe requiſites, in an ambaſſador of CHRIST, is of very fatal conſequence to the cauſe of Chriſtianity, and ſtrongly draws in queſtion the truth of the character and the reality of the divine appointment, and *even allowance* of GOD, to aſſume, or act, in the ſacred office.

What the qualifications are, which may be conſidered as eſſential

to the character, and neceſſary to the work and office of a Miniſter of CHRIST and the Goſpel, may be naturally deduced from a conſideration of the nature of the office and the directions and inſtructions of that Goſpel, with which they are intruſted. As to the nature of the office, it is eaſy to ſee, from the repreſentations of the ſcriptures, and the language of the Apoſtle in the text, that it is fitly conſidered as a *Stewardſhip*.—Hence the Miniſters of CHRIST are frequently ſpoken of as *Stewards*.—Hence they are ſaid to be "Stewards of GOD," and "Stewards of the manifold grace of GOD." "Stewards of the myſteries of GOD," &c. as we have already obſerved.—1 Cor. iv. 1. Tit. i. 7. And hence it is, that they are ſpoken of in the text, as *intruſted* with the Goſpel, to miniſter and diſpenſe it, in all its "treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge," grace and goodneſs, for the benefit and ſalvation of mankind, and for the edification, comfort, ſupport and eſtabliſhment of the Houſe of CHRIST, his Church in the world.

To enter more fully into this part of our ſubject, and to aſſiſt us in forming a rational and adequate idea of the treaſure, *in truſt*, committed to the Miniſters of CHRIST in the Goſpel, it may not be improper to look back and conſider what was the occaſion of, and what gave riſe to, ſuch a diſpenſation of grace, and the uſe, excellence and adaptedneſs of the diſpenſation itſelf, to the ends propoſed, for the good of mankind in the publication of it.

Mankind, who were created after the image of GOD, happy in a ſtate of innocence and rectitude, and capable of the higheſt improvements in virtue and goodneſs by a moſt irrational and unnatural as well as ungrateful defection and departure from GOD, fell from that ſtate of honor and happineſs in which they were at firſt created and placed; introduced *ſin*, *depravity*, *wretchedneſs* and *death* into the world: and thus, not only forfeited life and favor, but alſo, became juſtly expoſed to the diſpleaſure of Heaven, and the juſt wrath of an incenſed Deity, both in this life and that which is to come.

This being the ſtate of *depravity*, *wrath* and *ruin* to which mankind were reduced by ſin and apoſtacy from God, it remained with

him, as the righteous Sovereign of the World, to ſeal the ſentence of juſtice and law, or to provide for the redemption and reſtoration of offenders, upon terms of a new conſtitution, adapted to their ſtate of depravity, ſin and imperfection—And bleſſed be GOD, in the Councils of Heaven, the latter prevailed. For the glory of his name, and in compaſſion to the work of his hands, a merciful GOD, in infinite wiſdom, deviſed means whereby his baniſhed ſhould not be forever expelled.

The general deſign of the plan of redemption was early made known, and from the firſt ages of the Church and the world, ſuch openings of this myſtery of love, of wiſdom and grace were made, under former diſpenſations, as were adapted to the ſtate of mankind, and ſuited to advance the cauſe of religion and virtue, from time to time. But the full diſplays of the riches of wiſdom and grace, were reſerved to the coming of CHRIST; and this myſtery which had been hid from or but partially revealed to ages and generations paſt, is now made manifeſt, by CHRIST, in perſon, and his Miniſters and Apoſtles, under the immediate influence and direction of his ſpirit in the Goſpel.

The Goſpel, as declared by the Angels, at the birth of our LORD, was a meſſage of peace to an offending world, as it brings "good tidings of great joy to all people;"—as it propoſes terms of peace to ſinful men;—as it exhibits the richeſt encouragement to a return to GOD, and affords the ſtrongeſt aſſurances of a reſtoration to favor, and pardon and acceptance through a Mediator: and as it provides for the ſupport and ſupply of them that believe and obey it, and directs the eſtabliſhment of the Church, and the government and advancement of CHRIST's kingdom, in the world.

The Miniſters of the Goſpel are the Meſſengers of GOD, and Ambaſſadors of CHRIST, to whom it is intruſted to tranſact the great affairs of the *Treaty of Peace between* GOD *and Man*, and to manage the concerns of his Church and kingdom in the world. The Goſpel, the great charter of Chriſtian liberty, containing the Religion we are called to embrace, and a compleat ſyſtem of laws, directions and inſtructions for the Church and its members, in the rich treaſure and the ſacred truſt committed to them to diſpenſe to mankind.

The doctrines of the Goſpel, which are to be publiſhed, opened and explained for the enlightening, and inſtruction of men, in the way to obtain pardon, juſtification and acceptance with GOD, are the firſt and moſt ſacred part of the truſt. Theſe are at the foundation, as upon them the great principles of Chriſtianity are founded, and by a right underſtanding and explanation of them, the reaſonableneſs of the Religion of CHRIST, in preference to all others, may be fitly illuſtrated.

Next to the doctrines of the Goſpel, the precepts of holy living are to be conſidered, as an eſſential and important part of this ſacred truſt: For the end of doctrine and inſtruction, is reformation and obedience; and a little attention will teach us, that the moſt rational principles are of no avail, but when drawn into practice.

To excite to a ready reception of the doctrines and a cordial compliance with the precepts of the Goſpel, the riches of grace, as diſplayed in the life and character of CHRIST, and eſpecially in his ſufferings and death, are alſo to be conſidered as a part of this truſt;—and his Miniſters will greatly fail of a full diſcharge of their duty, if they neglect to preach unto men, *The unſearchable riches of* CHRIST, manifeſted herein, for the redemption and ſalvation of ſinners. Eph iii. 8.—Hence the apoſtle to the Corinthians, ſenſible of the importance of this part of his truſt, makes this declaration,—"And I, Brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſdom:—For I determined not to know any thing among you, ſave JESUS CHRIST, and him crucified." 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

Next to the Grace itſelf as diſplayed in and by a crucified Saviour, for the redemption of ſinners, the offers of Mercy and Grace, to ſinful men, and the endearing invitations to a compliance with the terms, on which ſalvation is preſented, are alſo to be admitted as contained in the truſt.

We may add, that the overtures of peace and reconciliation, made unto men, in the Goſpel, may not be in vain; all thoſe powerful

arguments, with which the Goſpel abounds, adapted to enlighten the mind, convince the reaſon, or form the judgment, as well as thoſe engaging and awaking motives, ſuited to improve the paſſions and affections to the purpoſes of religion, virtue and holineſs, are entruſted to the ſervants of CHRIST, in the Goſpel—and are wiſely adapted, as means of awakening ſinners to repentance, and promoting the comfort and edification of the penitent, the humble, the virtuous and the good.

Of this nature are the promiſes of the Goſpel, which are *exceeding great and precious*:—And to the ſame purpoſe are the faithful warnings and threatenings, in which, even in a diſpenſation of Grace, "The wrath of GOD is clearly revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men." Rom. i. 20.

In a word the ordinances of the Goſpel, the rules and directions for the government and diſcipline of the Churches, and every thing neceſſary to the glory of GOD in the ſalvation of Man, the eſtabliſhment of the Church, and the advancement of his Kingdom and intereſt in the world, are committed in truſt, to the ambaſſadors of CHRIST, to be diſpenſed to mankind.

From this repreſentation of the nature of the office and importance of the truſt, it is eaſy to ſee, that ſuch qualifications, as the reaſon of the thing, and the ſcriptures point out, are indiſpenſibly neceſſary to thoſe who would *be allowed of* GOD in devoting themſelves to, or engaging in ſo great and arduous a work. And that, to a good capacity, no ſmall attainments in knowledge, humane or divine, will be found ſufficient. Neither will a ſuperficial acquaintance with ourſelves with human nature, the world, religion, or the word of GOD, anſwer to furniſh and aſſiſt men to the diſcharge of the duties of ſo important an office, ſo intereſting a truſt. It is, under GOD, in addition to a religious and even *a liberal education*, by long, diligent, attentive, ſerious, painful and prayerful ſtudy, and meditation, that men are qualified to *approve themſelves unto* GOD, *workmen, that need not be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*. Eſpecially ſhould they ſeek an acquaint-

ance with the ſcriptures, in the original languages, that they might, with ſafety and propriety, appeal "to the law and the teſtimony," as the ſtandard of their own faith of the purity of the faith they preach, and of the doctrines they teach and inculcate upon thoſe whom they are called to inſtruct, in the religion of CHRIST. For want of this, ignorance and error will ſpring up and the great truths of religion will languiſh, and the cauſe of CHRIST, his Church and his kingdom will be in danger, and ſuffer damage.—Hence the apoſtle, "Not a novice, leſt being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the Devil."

A facility in communicating knowledge, and in teaching others, is called, by the Apoſtle, *aptneſs to teach*:—And is ſpoken of as a qualification, by no means to be diſpenſed with, in thoſe who are ſet for the defence of the Goſpel.

I might add, ſoundneſs in the faith, wiſdom, prudence, firmneſs, fortitude, with ſeveral other qualifications uſeful and ornamental in the miniſterial character; but the time will not admit. It muſt not, however, be concealed, that above all, a heart deeply impreſſed with an affecting ſenſe of the importance of the religion we teach, and a temper, life and converſation formed by and conformable to the doctrines, the precepts, the ſpirit and genius of that Goſpel we preach, is of the higheſt importance, in thoſe who aſpire after the character of miniſters of him, who was *holy, harmleſs, undefiled and ſeparate from ſinners.*

GOD may work by what inſtruments he pleaſeth, and it is not ours to limit his power, his wiſdom or his grace. But we have little reaſon to expect the divine appprobation, or ſucceſs in the miniſtry; while we have no ſacred regard to the religion we preach. We may indeed, like the Scribes and Phariſees, who ſat in Moſes' ſeat, teach others aright, but have juſt reaſon to fear, that having preached to others, we ourſelves ſhall be caſt away at laſt.

To be allowed of God, then, it is neceſſary that we be both prov-

ed and approved; and that both by ourſelves and thoſe whoſe province it is to introduce into the miniſtry according to the directions of the Goſpel.

That exhortation of St. Paul, to Chriſtians at large, may fitly apply in the preſent ſubject—*Examine yourſelves, prove your own ſelves.* There ought to be much ſerious examination, and *great ſearching of heart* on ſuch occaſions as this. We are not to ruſh into the Miniſtry, as the "horſe into the battle," without conſideration. At leaſt, we ſhould be anxious to have this token for good, that we have the approbation of our own minds in devoting ourſelves to God in the miniſtry of his Son. We are not indeed, the judges of the excellency, or even ſufficiency of our capacities, gifts or acquirements; but of the care, diligence and application we have uſed in forming and furniſhing ourſelves for ſuch an employment, and of the ſincerity of our diſpoſitions, the purity of our intentions and the ſimplicity of our deſigns under God, we are the beſt, the only judges. If upon ſerious impartial, ſelf examination, *our hearts condemn us*, we may aſſure ourſelves, that God *is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things.* 1 John iii. 20. And it would be daring preſumption, and at our utmoſt peril to attempt the ſacred truſt;—but *if our hearts condemn us not, then may we have confidence towards* God. And as to the proof of the ſufficiency and adaptedneſs of gifts and qualifications for the ſacred office, whether natural or acquired, this is juſtly obtained in the approbation and acceptance of God's faithful miniſters and people.

When, therefore, perſons poſſeſſed of the qualifications, which the Goſpel requires, are introduced into the miniſtry, in the way which is pointed out in the word of God, they may then be conſidered as "*allowed of God* to be put in truſt with the Goſpel," in the ſenſe of the Apoſtle in the words before us.—And the great head of the church may be conſidered as ſpeaking to them, and authorizing of them, as really, as he did his choſen diſciples, and Apoſtles, when, after his reſurrection he ſaid unto them "As my father hath ſent me even ſo ſend I you."—John xx. 21. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the ſon, and of the Holy

Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." Mat. xxviii. 19, 20.

This is their commiſſion, and theſe the inſtructions they receive from CHRIST the great head of the Church; and this the aſſurance of his preſence and ſupport, in a faithful diſcharge of the duties of their office, which he hath given for their encouragement. With ſuch a commiſſion, ſuch inſtructions, and ſuch aſſurance of preſence and ſupport from CHRIST himſelf, it would be natural and rational to ſuppoſe, that his faithful miniſters could ſcarcely fail of attention or ſucceſs.

The rule which the miniſters of CHRIST are to obſerve, the diſcharge of this high and honourable truſt is the Goſpel. The manner in which it is to be improved, is clearly pointed out in the words before us.—*As we are allowed of God*, to be put in truſt with the Goſpel, *even ſo we ſpeak:*

The word of GOD and Goſpel of CHRIST, are the great charter of the true Church, which is built on the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, and they contain the neceſſary inſtructions for thoſe to whom the myſteries of his kingdom are committed. A moſt ſacred regard to the living oracles of GOD, and the cloſeſt adherence to the Goſpel of CHRIST are abſolutely neceſſary to a diſcharge of the truſt committed to us—and the only way we can approve ourſelves faithful in it, as becomes the ſacred character.

The moment we leave the word of GOD, to adopt the ſentiments or "teach for doctrines, the commandments of men," however great or good—that moment we leave our guide—render ourſelves unworthy that light and direction we conſtantly received from him; and GOD only knows how far we ſhall wander from the paths of truth, or whether we ſhall ever return.—But in a ſacred regard to the light and rule given us, in the holy ſcriptures, in all, even the moſt difficult parts of the work aſſigned us, by our LORD and Maſter, we may aſſure ourſelves of his preſence, his acceptance and bleſſing:—But are always

unſafe and on a falſe foundation in the leaſt voluntary deviation from it.—Very applicable, therefore, is that of the Prophet, for warning and inſtruction. *To the law and to the teſtimony: if they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in them, and they ſhall paſs through it hardly beſtead. Iſai. viii. 20.* But to go on—

The end to be kept in view is of no leſs importance than the rule we obſerve. This the Apoſtle tells us is *not pleaſing men but* God.

To pleaſe men to their edification, and for their profit, that they may be ſaved—To adapt themſelves to the peculiar temper, character, circumſtances or capacities of thoſe to whom they miniſter.—To uſe thoſe arguments and motives that are beſt ſuited to engage their attention, take hold of their affections, to enlighten the underſtanding, warm the heart, or in any rational way influence to a compliance with the Goſpel, is, undoubtedly, both duty and wiſdom, in the ambaſſadours of Christ.—A very pleaſing proof, that they are workmen which need not be aſhamed.

But to be influenced by the fear or flattery of men,—to truckle to the humours of the vicious or depraved,—to ſhun to declare the counſel of God for fear of offending, or ſtriking at the darling ſins, luſts, or appetites of men,—to deal deceitfully with the word of God, out of regard to favorites or friends;—or to cauſe the truth of Christ to bow to the pre-conceived ſentiments of fallible mortals is utterly inconſiſtent with the dignity of the ſacred character and altogether unworthy the heavenly truſt repoſed in the miniſters of his kingdom.—And ſhould venal motives, fondneſs for applauſe, or any other ſordid deſire influence any to aim at pleaſing men rather than God, ſo far the end of the miniſtry is ſubverted, God diſhonoured and the religion of Christ expoſed to the malice and power of its bittereſt enemies.—And as to wretches in office, who are chargeable with ſuch conduct as this, it is eaſy to ſee, that of all men, they are moſt juſtly expoſed to the ſevereſt reſentments of an angry God and the hotteſt thunderbolts of divine vengeance, for meanly betraying the very cauſe, which, by every ſacred and endearing tie, they were ſo ſolemnly engaged to defend.—The ar-

gument, therefore, urged by the Apoſtle in the text, is worthy attention, and ſuited, as an application of the ſubject, both for awakening, warning and encouragement to the ambaſſadours of CHRIST. They are here repreſented as allowed of GOD and accountable to him.

The argument here uſed by the Apoſtle to excite fidelity in diſcharge of the truſt repoſed in the Miniſters of CHRIST is twofold.—Firſt they are urged to fidelity from a conſideration of the dignity of the office, and importance of the truſt repoſed in their hands, as derived from GOD. And, ſecondly, from a realizing ſenſe of the immediate preſence of GOD with them, and their accountableneſs to him, as their judge and rewarder.

The firſt is happily ſuited, from principles of gratitude, for the diſtinguiſhing honor conferred upon them, to excite their attention, diligence and fidelity. As allowed, as authorized by GOD, to be put in truſt with the Goſpel, they are under the moſt ſacred ties and indiſpenſible obligations to be faithful in his cauſe, and to make it their greateſt concern and their higheſt aim to pleaſe and approve themſelves to him, in the diſcharge of the truſt, he had committed to them.

But ſhould this argument fail, as, alas! thro' the frailty and imperfection of this mortal ſtate, it hath too frequently failed:—That no motive might be wanting, a conſideration of the *all piercing eye* of an *heart ſearching* GOD, as continually upon them, and their accountableneſs to him, as their ſovereign and judge, is urged to awaken their attention, to alarm their fears and excite their fidelity.

And certain it is, that two weightier arguments cannot be ſuggeſted, or even conceived of to awaken the attention, the diligence, watchfulneſs or zeal of intelligent beings to approve themſelves to GOD, and to be faithful in the truſt committed to their charge.

Upon the whole the ſubject before us, and what hath been ſuggeſted for the illuſtration and improvement of it, on ſo great and ſolemn an occaſion, cannot but be intereſting, and affecting, to all, who

believe and realize the truth of Chriſtianity, as revealed in the Goſpel.

It is a ſubject which is, in a peculiar manner, moſt deeply intereſting to us, my brethren, who have been "allowed of God to be put in truſt with the Goſpel, and admitted to take part of this miniſtry in the kingdom of his Son."

May it ſink down into our ears and into our hearts, and make a deep and a laſting impreſſion there. May it put us upon the moſt ſerious ſelf application, as well as critical and impartial enquiry how we have received and how we have fulfilled the miniſtry of the Goſpel, with which we have been honoured and intruſted.

The day is haſtening when we muſt all ſtand before the judgment ſeat of him who now "walks in the midſt of the golden candleſticks and holds the ſtars in his right hand;" of him "who hath eyes like a flame of fire, and will have all the churches,"—the angels and the members of the churches "to know, that he ſearcheth the reins and the hearts, to give to every one according to his works." Let us then, by ſo ſolemn an argument, be awakened, and perſuaded, above all things, to ſeek to be approved of God and to give up our account with joy.

It more eſpecially concerns you, my friend and brother, on this great and intereſting occaſion, ſeriouſly to attend to the ſubject before us and the thoughts, which have been ſuggeſted upon it, for our mutual aſſiſtance and edification, comfort and encouragement in the great, the honorable and arduous work to which we are called.

You are this day ſolemnly dedicating and devoting yourſelf to the ſervice of God, in the kingdom of his dear Son. The eyes of God, Angels and Men are upon you. In a ſelf application of the important truths, imperfectly ſuggeſted in the preceeding diſcourſe, we are naturally led to ſuppoſe, that it is a time of ſerious ſelf examination and great ſearching of heart with you. In a ſenſe of the frailty and imperfections of human nature, even in the greateſt and beſt of men, you,

perhaps, are ready to ſay, "LORD, *who is ſufficient for theſe things.*" At ſuch a time our only refuge is in GOD: And it is our wiſdom and duty to repair to him, devoutly acknowledging our entire dependence upon him, with earneſtneſs and ſincerity, humbly to implore the aſſiſtance of his grace and the ſupplies of his ſpirit, reſting in the truth of his promiſes, and meekly aſſuring ourſelves, that his grace is ſufficient for us, and that his ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs.

We rejoice, ſir, (and we truſt, with a joy that will never be taken from us,) that on evidence both ſolid, rational and convincing, we can realize the truth of your miſſion, and that you are this day, *allowed of* GOD, *to be put in truſt with the Goſpel of* CHRIST.

When you realize your calling and miſſion as not of man, neither by man, but by JESUS CHRIST, the Great Head of the Church, and GOD the Father, who raiſed him from the dead, let gratitude to both GOD and the SAVIOUR, by whom you are thus honoured and diſtinguiſhed, awaken all your attention, all your diligence, zeal and fidelity. When you reflect upon the nature of your office, and the importance of the qualifications indiſpenſibly requiſite to a faithful diſcharge of the duties of it, let it induce you to "ſtudy to ſhew yourſelf approved of GOD, a workman that needeth not be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of to truth."

When you contemplate the important truſt repoſed in you, the manner in which it is to be diſcharged, the end in view, the account to be given and to whom it muſt be rendered, you will need no other arguments to induce you to ſpeak and to preach as it becometh the Goſpel of CHRIST, *not as pleaſing men, but* GOD *which trieth our hearts.*

In a word, to the faithful diſpenſation of the truth, *as it is in* JESUS, you will not fail to add the more perſuaſive argument of a life conformed to the doctrines you preach, the precepts you inculcate, the ſpirit and genius of the Goſpel you are ſet to defend.

The Miniſters of CHRIST are as a city ſet on a hill, which cannot be hid. Much depends on their temper and conduct, as expreſſive of the

ſincerity of their hearts, in the religion they preach. "Let your light," then, "ſhine before men, that others ſeeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

You will be diſtinguiſhed, my brother, from your fathers and brethren in the Miniſtry, if *difficulties* and *trials* do not attend you. In all your perplexities, let GOD be your hope and your refuge: and bowing the knee to the *Father of Lights*, of Wiſdom and of Grace; commit your cauſe to him, humbly aſſuring yourſelf that none ever ſought him in ſincerity and ſought in vain.

May you go forth, my young friend, in the name and ſtrength of the LORD.—May *the Spirit of Glory and of* GOD *reſt upon you*.—May the preſence and bleſſing of the Great Shepherd of the Sheep attend you. Long may you be continued a rich bleſſing to this people, and a burning and ſhining light in this golden candleſtick; and having turned many to righteouſneſs, may you ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and as a ſtar in the kingdom of your Father forever!!

The inſtitution of the Miniſtry of the word and ordinances of GOD, in the ſeveral ages of the Church, and the world, and the providing for a ſucceſſion of Miniſters of religion, as of divine appointment eſpecially under the Goſpel, is truly expreſſive of the benevolence of the DEITY, in making proviſion for the improvement of the human mind in that knowledge, which is neceſſary and effectual to redeem and reclaim men from a ſtate of ſin and depravity, to form them to virtue and holineſs, and to train them up to a meetneſs for a ſtate of happineſs and glory beyond the grave. At the ſame time this inſtitution is equally a diſplay of the wiſdom and grace of GOD, for the edification and eſtabliſhment of his Church, and the ſupport of his cauſe and kingdom in the world.

On theſe principles, and on the preſent occaſion, we are conſtrained to ſay, that it is with peculiar ſatisfaction we have obſerved the meaſures, which you, my brethren, of this ſociety, have been led to adopt, from your firſt incorporation to the preſent time, for the purpoſes of religion, and the improvement of the human mind in knowledge and

virtue. We would eſpecially notice your early, earneſt and unremitting endeavors to lay a foundation for proſperity and happineſs, both in this world and that which is to come, *in religion and the worſhip of* God.—We rejoice to find a *Chriſtian Church gathered in this place*, in its infant ſtate, and proviſion made for the due and regular adminiſtration of the ordinances of the Goſpel.—Above all, we rejoice in the regularity, peace and harmony of your meaſures for the ſettlement of the Goſpel Miniſtry among you: and that, as we truſt, in anſwer to your fervent prayers, you have been led with ſuch uncommon unanimity, to make choice of a man to be "ſet over the congregation, to go in before you, and to go out before you," and to lead you into the green paſtures of God's word, and beſide the ſtill waters of his ordinances, and to take the overſight of you in the Lord.—A man, of whom, we, that have known him, his education, character, converſation and improvements, from his infancy to the preſent day, can, with freedom and confidence, ſpeak, as one well qualified for the great and arduous work to which he is called.—One whom, we can cheerfully recommend as a "*Paſtor according to* God's *heart, who will feed you with knowledge and underſtanding.*"—And, finally, as one, who is "*allowed of* God *to be put in truſt with the Goſpel,*" and who will not fail to make it his care and endeavor conſcientiouſly to ſpeak, to preach and miniſter, *not as pleaſing men but* God, *which trieth our hearts.*" Revere him, then, as a pledge of the Divine Love, and as a rich aſcenſion gift of the Great Mediator. Eſteem him highly in love, for his work's ſake, and be at peace among yourſelves; and the God of peace ſhall be with you.

Be perſuaded, my brethren, to make it your care to ſtrengthen his hands, and encourage his heart, in the great work to which he is called, by your fervent prayers, by a careful and conſtant attendance on his miniſtry—by a candid and cordial reception of the meſſages of God which he brings unto you—by a conſcientious compliance with the precepts of Christ, which he inculcates upon you, and by a life and converſation becoming the Goſpel with which he is intruſted.

While in fulfilment of the miniſtry he receives of the Lord, he faithfully teſtifies unto you that *repentance towards* God, and that *faith*

towards our LORD JESUS CHRIST, which the Goſpel requires and inſpires, may it be your greateſt concern, as "*the Grace of* GOD *teacheth, to deny all ungodlineſs and every worldly luſt, and to live ſoberly righteouſly and Godly in the preſent world.*" Then will you lay the happieſt foundation, at the ſame time, for your own profit and improvement, under his miniſtry, and his greater uſefulneſs among you.

You will ever bear it in mind, that he is allowed of GOD, and authorized by him, to *be put in truſt with the Goſpel*, and obliged as he would give up his account with joy at laſt, to approve himſelf unto GOD, as a faithful ſteward of the myſtery of Godlineſs; and *whether you will hear*, or *whether you forbear* to ſpeak as the Goſpel teaches, *not as pleaſing men but* GOD, *which trieth our hearts*. You will be perſuaded, then, never to count him your enemy for telling you the truth, or for faithfulneſs to him, by whom he is ſent, and to whom he muſt account.

May the early, general and generous expreſſions of eſteem, you have manifeſted towards him, be ripened into a laſting affection.—May you and your children, and even children yet unborn, be happy in his miniſtry. Long may you be continued bleſſings to our brother in this world: and at laſt may you be preſented to GOD a glorious Church *without ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing*; and be each other's joy and crown of rejoicing, in the preſence of our LORD JESUS, at his coming and kingdom.

To cloſe.—Let all in this aſſembly, of whatever age, ſtation or character in life, be put in mind that we are rational and immortal;—That we are candidates for eternity; that our time and talents, and all the means and ſeaſons of grace are given for improvement;—That we are acting for account; and that the time is haſtening, when the drama of the preſent world ſhall forever cloſe upon us—when the curtain of mortality ſhall fall, and the ſcenes of a world untried and unknown will open to view; when the judge will appear, "the judgment ſet, the books opened, and every one judged out of the things which are written in the books, according to their works," and when ſentence

will be paſſed, from which there will be no appeal, for an eternal ſtate ! ! !—

In a realizing view of theſe all-intereſting ſcenes, may we all be concerned, in our ſeveral characters, ſtations, and relations in life, ſo to improve our time, our talents and various betruſtments, as to give up our account with joy, receive the plaudit of our judge, and be welcomed to the rewards of his kingdom, with a "Well done good and faithful ſervant, thou haſt been faithful, enter thou into the joy of thy LORD !"

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10 OC 67